

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

September 8th, 2020

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday September 8th, 2020 at 7:05pm. This was directly following the Public Zoom Hearing that took place for the Arlington Reservoir Phase 2 Project at 6:00pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, and associate members, Sarah Carrier and Scott Lever were present. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance. Commission Member Scott Walker was not in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Laurie Bogdan and Kimberly Harding

Members of the Public: Alan Jones, Catherine Fenollosa, Evelyn Ginsparg, George Stephans, Henry Fenollosa, Josh Fenollosa, Joy Ahern, Lily Chung, Lindsay Keach Bronstein, Susan Stein, Elisabeth Carr-Jones

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

N/A

Afterschool Programs & Preschool Programs Use of Park Proposal Review

Mr. Connelly spoke on the requests received regarding the use of public parks by local afterschool and preschool programs. Mr. Connelly stated the application being used for this is based off the Business in the Parks Program application. Differences are the locations and timeframes that are being permitted. Locations that are requesting to be used include North Union Field, Robbins Farm Park, and Peasant Hill from 2:30-6:30pm. These requests do not include the playgrounds at these locations. The requests for Bishop Field and Pierce Field do include the playground structures on site. There is also a request for the Summer Street Field. The times for requests vary by location. In addition, requests are for/would be for specific parts of a property, not the entire the field. Mr. Connelly noted that if any locations next to/in close proximity to a school and have a playground, there will be no permits issued in the timeframe directly following dismissal. There will be a designated time to allow members of the public to access playgrounds directly after school.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that she had several questions regarding locations. At Robbins Farm, she is requesting that we do not permit the basketball courts as the school property already has a court located on it. Mr. Connelly believes this is a good point. Ms. Rothenberg asked Ms. Canniff if one hour was enough time for programs to access the playground. Ms. Canniff stated that most families are gone 30-45 minutes following dismissal. Ms. Rothenberg wanted to make sure this was enough time as once the afterschool programs have access to the playground; the public will not be able to use the space during their permitted timeframe. Ms. Rothenberg also had a question regarding the Florence basketball courts and leaving sometime afterschool for members of the public to play. Mr. Connelly stated that basketball is not currently approved as a cleared activity and members of the public should not be playing pick-up games at this time.

Mr. Lever asked Mr. Connelly to explain the situation at Bishop School again, as there are (2) playgrounds there. Mr. Connelly stated that this was a site requested. The playground requested to be reserved is the newer one that has the climbing structure incorporated. Ms. Mayer had a question regarding the release and waiver for these permits. The current waiver was taken from the Business in the Parks waiver. Mr. Connelly stated that since these afterschool programs and preschool programs are businesses, he left this information in.

Ms. Rothenberg asked regarding about tent placement requests. Currently, Mr. Connelly has not heard from the Arlington Public Schools regarding tent requests. Mr. Connelly reached out to the Superintendent requesting that she contact all school Principals to inquire if they have tent requests. Mr. Connelly reported that the

Superintendent has not received any to date. This may change in the future. Mr. Connelly has been contacted by several school parents who are also looking for designated times of use in public parks/placement of tents. He plans on meeting with these individuals this week to discuss their requests in more detail.

Mr. Lasker made the motion for a vote of support for allowing local after-school and preschool programs designated times of sole use on public parks and playgrounds. Ms. Rothenberg seconded this motion. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call. Ms. Canniff abstained from this vote due to personal matters. The remainder of the present voting Commissioners (Lasker, Rothenberg, Mayer) all voted in favor to approve the vote of support. The (3-0) vote is in quorum and passed the vote of support at 7:24pm

Tennis Court Rule Signage Review

Ms. Mayer brought up the topic of rule signage at Tennis Courts in Arlington. Concerns were brought to the Commission and this matter was discussed at the previous Commission Meeting. Mr. Connelly sent out pictures of all tennis court signs in Town to the Commissioners. Ms. Mayer looked back at Commission Meeting Minutes from the last two years, as it was undetermined when some of the current signs were placed and by whom. However, Mr. Connelly stated that he created the Crosby Court signs when he was previously with the department over 5 years ago. Ms. Canniff asked if the courts at Spy Pond received new signage after the renovation.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that she researched what tennis court policies are in surrounding Towns. She requested that the Commission focuses on the language of court rules in addition to times when this is discussed. Ms. Rothenberg also requested that Commissioners reconsider the 9:00am start time on Sundays at Crosby. There are no other sports in Town that restrict start times on specifically Sundays. Tennis is very popular and only growing. There are currently not many courts in Town. It was believed that the signage regarding the 9:00am Sunday start time could have been a mistake.

Ms. Rothenberg proposed that the Commission reviews all the rules, regulations, and time frames for tennis courts in Town. Ms. Mayer stated this was discussed during the previous Commission Meeting and Mr. Connelly will be doing a review of all tennis procedures this off season. Signage and rules will be included in the process. Mr. Connelly will be looking into an online booking system to reserve tennis courts in Arlington as well. All signage will be reviewed at this time. Ms. Rothenberg asked Mr. Connelly to share his recommendations with the Commission when this is determined. This was confirmed by Ms. Mayer.

Laurie Bogdan and Kimberly Harding Art in Park Request for Spy Pond

Laurie Bogdan and Kimberly Harding were present for the Commission Meeting. They had previously reached out to the Commission regarding an art request at Spy Pond. Ms. Harding talked about the specific piece of art that they would like to install and share with the Arlington Community. This is an environmental themed piece and focuses on the waterways around the surrounding area and through Massachusetts. The requested time frame for this request would be for October, 2021. Ms. Bogdan believes this installation would be a very fun feature for individuals at Spy Pond to look at. With the location requested for placement being across from the playground, it will attract attention from both children and adults in the area.

It was stated that if installed, they would work with individuals in the local art community to have speaking and educational events focused around this art installation. Ms. Mayer noted that both Ms. Harden and Ms. Bogdan have already gone through the necessary steps and process which is required for all requests by the Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture. Ms. Mayer asked if there were any questions from Commission Members regarding this request. Ms. Rothenberg thanked them and believed the design was beautiful. Ms. Rothenberg asked if the installation would have any impact on Arlington-Belmont Crew and the location that they currently use at Spy Pond. It was confirmed that this installation would have no impact on them. Its location would be behind the existing fence and would not conflict with the space of any user groups. Ms. Mayer confirmed that the piece would be strung between trees. No other specific questions or comments came from the remainder of the Commissioners.

Ms. Canniff made the motion to approve this art installation request at Spy Pond in October of 2021. This motion comes with the condition of a finals site walk through with Mr. Connelly prior to the installation next year. Ms. Rothenberg seconded this motion. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call and the motion passed, (4-0), approving this art installation request at 7:39pm.

Correspondence Received: Mountain Biking and Crusher Lot

Ms. Mayer gave an update on the correspondence received in regards to the ongoing discussion around mountain biking in Arlington. While the Mountain Biking Task Force is exploring all options, the correspondence received was specific to the original suggested location of the Crusher Lot. It was reported that a Friends of Crusher Lot Group has formed. Ms. Rothenberg believes it would be helpful to learn more about this and who is a part of this group. Regarding the conversation around mountain biking at the Crusher Lot, she believes there are two separate issues. The first issue being that local kids had created mountain biking paths without permission. The second issue was regarding safety concerns for users of the property. Even though there has not been more trails added since the ones previously referenced, activity has increased on the property. Ms. Rothenberg believes this is a good thing as more members of the community are using the space. Ms. Rothenberg requested if Mr. Connelly or the Mountain Biking Task Force could do a walkthrough of Crusher Lot to identify areas they would consider dangerous. Correspondence was received regarding individuals placing boulders and trees on the mountain biking trails which were built, which could lead to injuries for riders. Ms. Rothenberg stated after visiting the property, she personally believes it has looked the same for many years and could not identify any real changes.

Ms. Mayer asked if the Task Force has done a walkthrough of the Crusher Lot property. Mr. Connelly stated that a previous visit had occurred and that the group was scheduled to do an additional visit next week. Mr. Connelly stated that he continues to receive a very high number of emails regarding the Crusher Lot. The subjects of these emails vary and include members of the public wanting them identify if anything is dangerous. It seems that some individuals that have been sending correspondence are just against the idea of mountain biking at Crusher as they don't want the property and its current use to change at all. Ms. Rothenberg asked if this was specific to the trails or the activity of mountain biking in general. Mr. Connelly believes it is mountain biking users in general and the risk of collision with other users.

Mr. Lasker believes that Ms. Rothenberg is correct and that there are two separate issues on hand. Mr. Lasker stated that the goal of the task force is to look at if mountain biking is right for Arlington and if so, to identify areas where trails and skills courses can be placed. They will now also be looking into the current safety for all users at the Crusher Lot currently. Mr. Lasker followed up on Mr. Connelly's comment regarding that some people don't want any change there at all and are just against the idea. Mr. Lasker stated that the task force is looking at all possible locations and the pros/cons of each. The task force is scheduled to meet at Hill's Hill this Friday for a walkthrough of the property. Mr. Lasker stated that lets say the task force determines that Hill's Hill is a good location and they add trails there, what will prohibit members of the public using Crusher Lot in the future in the same manner that they currently do now? Mr. Lasker went on by stating that Arlington's park are for shared use and do not want to limit a specific user group. The vision for this is yet to be thought out and if something is to be implemented somewhere, what will it look like. Mr. Lasker personally envisions something similar to Rock Meadow in Belmont, which is a space used by riders, walkers, and dog walkers of all ages.

Mr. Lasker stated that he believes the original proposal for mountain biking in Town and specifically at the Crusher Lot from Henry Fenollosa is a little different from what people believe. This proposal is not for a biking specific location. This proposal and how Mr. Lasker envisions it is rather a place with shared use trails where riders can focus on skill building. Riders can then go to more mountain biking specific properties that are out of Town once they have worked on building their basic skills on shared use trails. It was at the task force's first meeting that if they are to decide that a pump track system is right for Arlington, perhaps this could be placed in an alternative location other than where possible trails are placed.

Ms. Canniff stated that she believes there is an elephant in the room in regards to this topic and the impacts of the ongoing pandemic. With the current situation, this allowed for a great deal of correspondence to come in. Children in Town are looking for a place to go and ride, while others may have more time on their hands being at home.

Ms. Canniff thinks there is currently a lot of both good and bad regarding this overall conversation. She loves seeing more biking and users of parks in Town, but is struggling with the correspondence of negative feedback in terms of how the park is being used. She stated that she recently visited the Crusher Lot several times in the last few weeks and each time, she did not observe any mountain bikers. Ms. Canniff is aware of the safety concerns some members of the public have, but stated that mountain biking is how these school age individuals like to use the property. Ms. Canniff stated that the Commission will figure this out.

Ms. Rothenberg agrees that parks should have shared use. Mr. Lever thanked Ms. Canniff and Rothenberg for their comments regarding this and stated that this really strikes home. Mr. Lever stated that he has two sons who have aged out of the traditional things which recreational parks have to offer. Shared use is very important. Ms. Mayer agrees with fellow Commissioners. She is also concerned with the amount of correspondence received regarding the Crusher Lot. Ms. Mayer recently visited the property and remembers it as it was when she was in high school. While it is not very big, it is a beautiful property that she believes should be shared by as many different types of users as possible. The Commission is working hard to make sure that spaces limited in size can serve as many users as possible in a safe way. Ms. Mayer is looking forward to what the Task Force determines. She stated that Henry Fenollosa is a member of the task force. Ms. Rothenberg thanked Mr. Fenollosa. She stated the younger riders that she has encountered at the property have been very respectful. Ms. Rothenberg believes one of the most important things to come out of this is education and respect for all users. Ms. Mayer agreed with this. Mr. Lever asked if there was an existing strategic plan for the Crusher Lot, which there is nothing to date. Mr. Connelly stated that the new friends group is looking to host a cleanup day at the property. Ms. Rothenberg requested that this information be shared once available and that this is open to the public. Ms. Mayer stated this would occur. More updates on the Mountain Biking Task Force will be made available as the group continues to meet.

Capital Project Updates

- ***Lussiano Playground***

- Mr. Connelly stated that they have been working on placing the rubber safety surfacing at the new Lussiano Playground. The project is near completion. The construction crew will be unloading the final pieces of playground equipment which need to be installed. Mr. Connelly believes that the project will be near 100% complete by the next Commission Meeting. Ms. Rothenberg asked if there would be an opening ceremony for the playground. Mr. Connelly stated with the current situation with COVID-19, there will be no official opening ceremony. Announcements will be made regarding the opening. Mr. Connelly stated the site still needs to be inspected and more updates regarding an opening date will be made available once determined.

- ***Arlington Reservoir Phase 1 and 2***

- Mr. Connelly stated that there is currently no update regarding the electrical hookup for at the Reservoir. The department is currently waiting for the adhesive for the pilot path project. This location is fenced in currently, but still passable. Prior to this current Commission Meeting, a public meeting was held for Phase 2 of the Reservoir Project. Mr. Connelly believes that this went very well.
- Ms. Canniff stated that she is a big supporter of have the boat ramp directly across from the parking lot opening. This will allow any emergency vehicles easy access if needed.
- Mr. Connelly asked Commission Members to take time and look at the detailed design set and for them to send him any questions that they might have.
- Ms. Rothenberg has concerns regarding budgeting. Commission Members further discussed this and talked about inconsistencies of items discussed that don't match in the current plan. This discussion also included the general project timeline, specifically the timeframe which the parking lot would be installed, and separating the bid for the building work from the other work.

Feasibility Study

Mr. Connelly put out the bid for a feasibility study. This study would focus on determining capital projects for the next (5) years. The goal of this is to have a plan and cost estimates. Mr. Connelly will be trying to push

through FY 22 projects to have estimates when these projects are discussed. RFPS due on October 15th. They will need to determine and submit numbers for CPA by mid-October. These numbers do not need to be exact, but will determine if the CPA asks for them to submit final applications.

Task Group Updates

- ***Town Wide Playground***

The Town Wide Playground Task Force recently met. This group reviewed the latest capital project for parks and playgrounds. They are currently working on adopting and implementing playground ambassadors in Arlington. The group is also working on a maintenance check list with the DPW which will be presented to the Commission once it is ready.

- ***Reservoir Playground***

Please see above

- ***Mountain Biking***

Please see above

Recreation & Rink Updates

Mr. Vaillette gave an update on Recreation. Registration for recreation programs opens next week, Monday September 14th at 8:00am. The department is currently scheduled to run a full slate of programs. Decisions on programs will be based off the COVID-19 situation and changes will be made as needed. Brochures are currently being sent and will be heading to mailboxes in the next week or two. The department is currently developing plans to open a center for remote learning. This will be a full day program and details on this will be posted on the website in the next few weeks. Mr. Connelly gave a rink update. The rink operation is in full swing with daily users. While the rink is currently scheduled with users every day, it is open in a limited capacity. Public skate will start the week of September 28th and pre-registrations will be taken online.

Approval of Minutes – August 28th, 2020

Ms. Mayer brought up approval of meeting minutes for the Commission's Meeting on August 28th. It was noted that this would be tabled for approval until the September 22nd Meeting to allow more time for review.

It was also noted that the approved Commission Meeting Minutes posted on the Town's from the February 25th meeting are not the original version. This document is a scanned PDF. Ms. Mayer requested that Mr. Vaillette upload the original PDF version which is not scanned.

Comments and Items For Future Meetings

- Block Scheduling
- Tennis Rules, Regulations, & Scheduling System Review

Other

- Ms. Rothenberg asked if the permitting for the after-school and preschool programs would be looked at as a pilot program. Mr. Connelly stated that the Commission will review this process in (4) weeks. While Todd Morse is taking the lead as the representative from these programs, Ms. Rothenberg believes it would make sense to have more representatives.
- Ms. Rothenberg stated that she observed a post on Facebook. This post was referring to a member of the public trying to fix a swing at the Robbins Farm Playground with WD40. She stated that members of the public should not be doing maintenance on playgrounds and asked to put in a request to have the DPW look at the swings. Mr. Connelly reported that the Department is currently spending an estimated \$8,000 on the Robbins Farm as there is a broken climbing ladder, slide, and seesaw. These items are being fixed and the swings will be looked at.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lasker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 8:39pm.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette